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ABSTRACT

The 1975 school status of 696 students enrolled in Toronto special education (nonmedical related) programs in 1970 was examined to determine whether special education was effective in returning children to regular classes. Data indicated that of the 49 percent of the students remaining in the Toronto school system, 32 percent had returned to regular classes and 68 percent were still in special programs. Rates of return to regular classes varied according to specific program type, child's age, and the socioeconomic status of his family. (Author/CL)

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STUDENT "FLOW-THROUGH" IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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#127

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STUDENT "FLOW-THROUGH" IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

The evaluation of special education programs is a difficult and complex task. Measures of success as well as philosophies and treatments vary widely among the different programs and thus make standard evaluation criteria difficult to establish. However, one common goal for most programs is to rehabilitate a child to the point where he can return to a regular class and function adequately. Keeping this goal in mind, we can begin an evaluation by simply asking the question: "Do special class students return to regular classrooms?" To answer this question and to provide further background information for a more extensive evaluation, an examination of the student flow-through from special education classes was undertaken. The sample of students considered was drawn from the total student body as indicated by the Every Student Survey of 1970[1]. The special students to be followed up were selected according to the following criteria:

(1) The students were born in the year 1960, 1961, 1962, or 1963. In other words, the students considered were either 7, 8, 9 or 10 years old in 1970. This age restriction was imposed so that in 1975 all of the students would be under 16 and legally still in the school system.

(2) The students were in any special education classes except classes related to medical problems (e.g., health, blind, deaf). Specifically, the following 1970 classes were included in the sample:

Special Program - primary
Special Program - junior
Special Program - intermediate
Special Program - ungrouped
Special Program - orthopaedic (i.e. "orthopaedic opportunity" in 1970)
Perceptual
Behavioural
Special Reading
Aphasic (Special Program - Language)
Aphasic - half day
Behavioural - half day

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1 Wright, E. N. Student's background and its relationship to class and programme in school (The every student survey). Toronto: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, Research Department, 1970 (#91).

Of all the students enrolled in the system in 1970, 696 satisfied the criteria listed above. Their ages were distributed as follows:

- born in 1960: 330 (47%)
- " " 1961: 235 (34%)
- " " 1962: 105 (15%)
- " " 1963: 26 (4%)

696

Males: 463 (67%) Females: 233 (33%)

Program Distribution

Of these 696 students, the greatest percentage was enrolled in the special program primary classes (34%) and junior classes (21%) followed by the perceptual program (14%), special program - ungrouped (13%) and the behavioural program with 10%. A detailed distribution follows.

Program Distribution:		
	Special Program - primary	236 (34%)
	Special Program - junior	145 (21%)
	Perceptual	96 (14%)
	Special Program - ungrouped	89 (13%)
	Behavioural	62 (9%)
	Special Reading	32 (4%)
	Aphasic (S.P. - Language)	19 (3%)
	Special Program - orthopaedic	8 (1%)
	Aphasic - half day	5 (.7%)
	Behavioural - half day	3 (.4%)
	Special Program - intermediate	1 (.1%)

To determine the "flow-through" of these students from special classes in 1970, their I.D. numbers were matched with the master student file to determine their school status as of February, 1975.

Results

1. In 1975, of the 696 special education students,

   342 (49%) were still in the Toronto system

   354 (51%) had left the system.

2. Of the 342 students in the system,

   110* (32%) had returned to regular classes

   232 (68%) were still in special classes.

* Many of these students might be receiving itinerant, withdrawal or resource room help. When regular class figures are quoted throughout the report, the possibility of students receiving extra help should be kept in mind.

3. Of the 232 students still in special classes, 76% were enrolled in a senior program (S.P. - Senior A.V., Senior, or Special Vocational). The remaining 24 were distributed among a wide variety of other programs. A detailed breakdown of the distribution is as follows:

S.P. - Senior A.V.	71	(31%)
S.P. - Senior	64	(28%)
S.V.	40	(17%)
S.P. - Junior	16	(7%)
S.P. - Language Jr.	7	(3%)
S.P. - Intermediate Withdrawal	6	(3%)*
Perceptual - Intermediate	5	(2%)
Home Instruction (Intermediate)	5	(2%)
S.P. - Ungrouped	4	(1.7%)
S.P. - Junior Withdrawal	3	(1.3%)*
S.P. - Orthopaedic (Intermediate)	3	(1.3%)
S.P. - Orthopaedic (Junior)	2	(.9%)
Perceptual - Junior	1	(.4%)
Behavioural	1	(.4%)
Hearing - Intermediate	1	(.4%)
Home Instruction (Junior)	1	(.4%)
S.P. - Primary	1	(.4%)
Unspecified	1	(.4%)
	232	

4. Follow-up for Individual Programs:

(a) S.P. Primary

Of the 696 students in our sample, 236 pupils were in S.P. Primary in 1970. In 1975, 112 (47%) of these students were still in the Toronto system. Of these students still in the system, 19 (17%) had returned to regular classrooms and the remaining 93 were still in special programs. Of these students, 64% were in senior programs and the remainder distributed among other programs.

Regular Classes	19	(17%)
S.P. - Senior	32	(29%)
S.P. - Senior A.V.	25	(22%)
S.V.	15	(13%)
S.P. (Junior)	13	(12%)
S.P. (Junior - Withdrawal)	2	(2%)
S.P. (Orthopaedic - Intermediate)	2	(2%)
S.P. (Primary)	1	
S.P. (Ungrouped)	1	
S.P. (Orthopaedic - Junior)	1	
Home Instruction	1	

* In actual fact, the numbers are probably greater since the computer's withdrawal classes contain less than half the actual number of students receiving help on a withdrawal basis. This also implies that numbers for regular classes are slightly higher than they should be.

4. (b) S.P. Junior

Of the 145 pupils in the special program junior in 1970, 71 (49%) were still in the Toronto system in 1975. Of these 71 students, 18 (25%) had returned to regular classes by 1975 and the remaining 75% were in special programs at the senior level.

Regular Classes	18 (25)
S.P. - Senior A.V.	23 (32%)
S.P. - Senior	15 (21%)
S.V.	12 (17%)
S.P. - Intermediate Withdrawal	2 (3%)
Home Instruction	1 (2%)

(c) S.P. Ungrouped

Of the pupils in our sample, 89 were in ungrouped special programs in 1970. Of the 46 pupils still in Toronto in 1975, 13 (28%) were in regular classes and 33 were in special classes (mainly senior).

Regular Classes	13 (28%)
S.P. - Senior A.V.	12 (26%)
S.V.	10 (22%)
S.P. - Senior	9 (20%)
S.P. - Ungrouped	1 (2%)
S.P. - Withdrawal Junior	1 (2%)

(d) Perceptual

Of the students enrolled in the perceptual classes in 1970, 96 were included in our sample. In 1975, 63% of these students were still in the Toronto system. Over half of these students (55%) had returned to regular classes and the remaining 27 students were in various special programs as listed below.

Regular Classes	33 (55%)
S.P. - Senior A.V.	8 (13%)
S.P. - Senior	6 (10%)
Perceptual - Intermediate	4 (7%)
S.P. - Junior	3 (5%)
S.P. - Withdrawal Intermediate	2 (3%)
Perceptual - Junior	1 (1.75%)
S.P. - Ungrouped	1 (1.75%)
S.P. - Language - Junior	1 (1.75%)
Home Instruction	1 (1.75%)

(e) Behavioural

Sixty-two pupils in the behavioural program in 1970 were included in the follow-up. Only 18 of them (29%) were still in the Toronto school system in 1975 but 61% (11) of these 18 were in regular classes. The other 7 were in the following special programs:

Regular Classes	11 (61%)
S.P. - Senior A.V.	2 (11%)
Home Instruction	2 (11%)
S.P. - Senior	1 (5.6%)
Behavioural	1 (5.6%)
S.P. - Ungrouped	1 (5.6%)

(f) Special Reading

Of 32 pupils in special reading classes in 1970, 18 were available in 1975 for follow-up. Of the 18, 13 were in regular classes, 2 in a withdrawal program, 2 in the Senior - A.V. program, and 1 in a perceptual class.

(g) Aphasic (S.P. - Language)

Nine of the original 19 students were in the school system in 1975. Only 1 was in a regular class, 5 were in Special Language classes, and 1 was in a Hard of Hearing class.

(h) Other Programs

(1) Of 8 students in the Special Orthopaedic program in 1970, only 2 were in the system in 1975 and both were still in special orthopaedic classes.

(2) Aphasic - Half Day -- Five students in the sample were in this program in 1970 and the one student still in Toronto in 1975 was in a special language program.

(3) Behavioural - Half Day - Of the 3 students, only 1 was in the system in 1975 on a Home Instruction program.

Follow-up Summary

Program (1970)	Number (1970)	In System 1975		Regular		Special	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Special Reading	32	18	56	13	72	5	28
Behavioural	62	18	29	11	61	7	39
Perceptual	96	60	63	33	55	27	45
S.P. - Ungrouped	89	46	52	13	28	33	72
S.P. - Junior	145	71	49	18	25	53	75
S.P. - Primary	236	112	47	19	17	93	83
Aphasic (S.P. - Language)	19	9	47	1	11	8	89

Approximately 50% of the students in most programs left the Toronto system between 1970 and 1975. The highest mobility rate occurred in the Behavioural Program where only 29% of the 1970 students were in the system in 1975. At the other extreme was the Perceptual Program where 63% remained in the system.

Of the students in special classes in 1970 who remained in the Toronto system, about one-third had returned to regular classes within five years. The return rate varied among programs from 11% to 72%. The Special Programs (Primary, Junior, Ungrouped) tended to have about 24% of their 1970 students in regular classes in 1975, followed by the Perceptual Program with 55%, Behavioural 61%, and Reading with 72%.

Relationship Between Age (Year of Birth) and Flow-through

The importance of the early identification of exceptional children has been established in recent years. Looking at the flow-through of special students we can compare the "success rate" of different age groups in special classes in 1970.

When we look at the number of students who have returned to a regular class by 1975 we find that for the older children in 1970 only 27% returned to regular programs compared to a 64% return rate for the youngest 1970 children. Although numbers are small for the youngest children, the trend of the results seems to support the importance of early identification and early placement of special students.

Year of Birth	Age in 1970	Special Class		Regular Class	
		No.	%	No.	%
1960	10	130	73	47	27
1961	9	67	65	36	35
1962	8	31	61	20	39
1963	7	4	36	7	64

For the average special class student in 1970, it appears as though the older a child was in 1970, the greater the likelihood the child has of being in a special class five years later. A statistical test confirmed this hypothesis ($x^2 = 8.9$, $df = 3$, $.02 \leq p < .05$).

Perhaps more useful than the latter general analysis is a similar analysis for the individual programs. It is possible that some programs are more sensitive to age differences than others.

Because of the 50% mobility factor, there were insufficient numbers of students in 1975 to look at the data for most of the programs. However, sufficient numbers made it possible to examine age differences for the special programs (primary, junior, ungrouped) and the perceptual program.

Special Program (Primary, Junior, Ungrouped) *

Year of Birth	Special Class No.	%	1975	Regular Class No.	%
1960	106	80		26	20
1961	53	79		14	21
1962	22	78		6	22
1963	1	33.3		2	66.6
	182			48	

No significant differences.

* These three groups were combined because when taken separately there were insufficient numbers in many of the cells.

Perceptual

Year of Birth	Special Class No.	%	1975	Regular Class No.	%
1960	15	65		8	35
1961	8	36		14	64
1962	4	36		7	64
1963	1	25		3	75
	28			32	

($x^2 = 1.138$, df = 3, $.1 \leq p \leq .2$)

There is a very slight indication that the older a child was in 1970, the greater his likelihood of being in a special class in 1975.

The hypothesis then, that the younger a child is, the greater likelihood he has of returning to a regular program, is true for the general case but definitely is affected by program. For the "opportunity" programs no age differences seem to exist whereas for the perceptual program, the child's age does seem to influence his chance of returning to regular classes.

Relationship Between Socio-Economic Status and Flow-through

As in the Every Student Survey[2], for this analysis the occupation of the head of the household was categorized into eight ordered groups (numbers 2 to 9). Additional categories were used to describe housewives, unemployed, pensioners, etc.

2 Ibid, pg. 1.

The results of the Every Student Survey indicated significant patterns in the relationship between special class placement and occupation. There was a steady decrease of the proportion of students in "Special Class A" as one moved up the occupational categories. This grouping of special classes included the primary, junior, non-grouped special programs, the senior programs (senior, senior A.V., special vocational) and the special orthopaedic classes. All other special classes were grouped under a second heading "Special Class B." The socio-economic trend found in Special Class "A" partially reversed itself in the Special Class "B" but was less consistent.

This study has also attempted to examine the relationship between socio-economic status and special class placement by looking at the percentage of children in special classes in 1970 who returned to regular classes by 1975 for each occupational group. In general, it was found that as one moved up the occupational categories the percentage of returns to regular programs increased. For occupation groups 2, 3, 4 and 5, the percentage of special students who returned to regular classes ranged from 20% to 35%, whereas for categories 6, 7, 8 and 9, the return rate ranged from 45% to 80%. However, caution should be taken in making conclusive statements because of the small numbers in many of the occupational groups.

The following table shows the breakdown of follow-up placement by occupation group for the 342 special students of 1970 who were in the Toronto system in 1975:

RETURNS TO REGULAR PROGRAMS
(CATEGORIZED BY OCCUPATION OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD)

Occupation	N	1975	
		Regular Class (%)	Special Class (%)
2 - labourers, taxi drivers, etc.	180	30.9	69.1
3 - sheetmetal workers, mechanics, etc.	21	34.8	65.2
4 - sales clerks, machinists, etc.	12	25.0	75.0
5 - printing workers, electricians, etc.	20	20.0	80.0
6 - dental technicians, embalmers, etc.	12	50.0	50.0
7 - musicians, athletes, etc.	9	44.5	55.5
8 - clergymen, librarians, etc.	10	80.0	20.0
9 - accountants, engineers, lawyers, etc.	9	66.7	33.3
10 - retired, Workmen's Compensation	1	--	--
11 - Welfare, Mother's Allowance	4	25.0	75.0
12 - university student, adult retraining	6	66.7	33.3
13 - unemployed	15	31.2	68.8
14 - housewife	31	35.5	64.5
TOTAL	330*	34.0	66.0

* No information for 12 students.

Relationship Between Sex and Flow-through

The ratio of males to females in the sample of the special class students of 1970 is about 2 to 1. Of the males still in the system in 1975, 66% of them were still in special classes. For the females, 73% were in special classes in 1975.

Sex	Special Class		1975	Regular Class		Total
	No.	%		No.	%	
Female	73	73		27	27	100
Male	159	66		83	34	242
	232			110		342

($x^2 = 1.72$, df = 1, $.15 \leq p \leq .2$)

There seems to be a slightly greater likelihood for girls in special classes in 1970 to be in special classes in 1975. However, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

Patterns of Mobility

Of the students in special classes in 1970, 51% (354) had left the Toronto System by February, 1975.

Year	Number of Students Who Left	
	No.	%
1970	79	22
1971	74	21
1972	81	23
1973	63	18
1974-75	57	16

Status of Students When They Left

Year	Special Class		Regular Class	
	No.	%	No.	%
1970	77	97	2	3
1971	64	86	10	14
1972	57	70	24	30
1973	49	78	14	22
1974-75	46	81	11	19
Still in System	232	68	110	32

Of the students who are still in the system, 68 % are in special classes. Of the students who left the system, a much greater percentage (70% to 97 %) were in special classes at the time they left.

By Program: Percentage of Students Who Left System

Most programs had approximately 50% mobility. At the extremes were the behavioural program with 71% of the students leaving, and the perceptual program with 37% of its 1970 students leaving the system by 1975.

Program	Number (1970)	Number Who Left	
		No.	%
Behavioural	62	44	71
S.P. - Junior	145	74	51
S.P. - Primary	236	124	53
Aphasic (S.P. - Language)	19	10	53
S.P. - Ungrouped	89	43	48
Special Reading	32	14	44
Perceptual	96	36	37

Summary of Results

Of the 696 special students who satisfied the specified age and class criteria for 1970, 51% had left the Toronto School System by February, 1975. Of the 342 students still in the system, 32% (110) had returned to regular classes and 68% (232) were still in various special classes. The percentage of returns to regular classes varied widely according to program. There was a tendancy for more "specialized" programs (perceptual, behavioural, special reading) to have higher "success" rates than the "opportunity" programs (e.g., Perceptual - 55% in regular class, S.P. - Primary - 17% in regular classes). When talking about "success" we are assuming a goal common to all special programs: to rehabilitate a child to the point where he can return to a regular class and function adequately. It is realized, however, that this goal is not a realistic one

for all children. The data do not reveal evidence that the children in the regular classes are functioning adequately. However, it can be assumed from the stated goals of the program that the placement in a regular class is in itself a measure of success.

Another interesting result indicated that in general, the younger the special student in 1970, the likelier he was to be in a regular class in 1975. When this phenomenon was examined by program, the same result was found for the perceptual program but for the special programs (primary, junior, ungrouped) no significant differences in age appeared.

The relationship found between socio-economic status and flow-through confirmed the results of the Every Student Survey of 1970. The data showed that children from lower occupation groups tend to have a greater representation in special classes and also tend to have a greater likelihood of staying in special classes longer than children from the higher occupation groups.

Other program differences appeared in the area of "mobility" (i.e. leaving the system). The behavioural program showed the greatest mobility (71% left the system) and the perceptual program the least with only 37% of the original students leaving the system from 1970 to 1975.

The answer to the question, "Do special class students return to regular classes?" is now not as straight-forward as one would like to believe. This study has revealed that many factors are involved in the process of "flow-through." The specific program, the socio-economic status and age of the child were the most easily determined factors from the data available, but by no means exhaust the list of complex issues that affect the success of special education programs.